

# Knox Regional Communications Center Executive Board

**Thursday  
June 4, 2020  
2:00 p.m.**

A meeting of the Executive Board of the Knox Regional Communications Center took place on **Thursday, June 4, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.** via Zoom.

**Executive Board members in attendance:** Rockland PD Chief Chris Young; Camden Fire Chief Chris Farley (*left at 2:25 p.m.*); Jesse Thompson, Union EMS; Adam Miceli, Rockland Fire/EMS; Ruston Barnard, Rockland Fire/EMS; and Chief Deputy Patrick Polky. **Members absent:** *Knox County EMA Director Ray Sisk.*

**Others in attendance:** Communications Director Robert Coombs; Administrative Programs Coordinator Candice Richards; and Knox County Administrator Andrew Hart.

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| <b>I.</b>   | <b>2:00</b> | <b>Meeting Called To Order</b>   |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b>2:01</b> | <b>Discussion Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Update from Director Coombs</li><li>2. Dispatching Issues from Chief Whytock</li></ul> |
| <b>III.</b> |             | <b>Other Business</b>  |
| <b>IV.</b>  |             | <b>Adjourn</b>   |

## **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Farley at 2:00 p.m.

## **II. Discussion Items**

### **1. Update from Director Coombs.**

Oral boards for the last open dispatcher position have just been held. The decision will be made pending the background check. Once that position is filled, the department will be fully staffed except for the deputy director position that's still open.

### **2. Dispatching Issues from Chief Whytock.**

Chief Farley explained that Chief Whytock had expressed some concerns and Director Coombs was trying to deal with them. Some of the issues as relayed by Adam Miceli:

- lack of consistency from dispatchers
- specific issues related to RFD changing their notification procedures
- dispatchers are having a hard time getting the info needed to decide who to send to the call
- Dispatchers are trained to tone the call out using just the code and not making a statement about what's going on until someone gets to the location and gives an update on the situation. Departments are used to dispatchers giving some additional info while the department is enroute but that isn't happening anymore, possibly in part due to the newer dispatching protocols.

Director Coombs explained that high band isn't always closed circuit and so it's not always appropriate to share information that way. The newer dispatching protocols have been an adjustment/learning process for everybody. Dispatch can't send info just to Rockland because then the other responding agencies won't hear the traffic. The Center also has a lot of new dispatchers and they are being trained

now to use the determinate codes because that's what the state wants. They haven't worked here long enough to know how it used to be done or know that you're on the other end of the radio expecting additional information.

An example Adam gave is when there's a tone out for a medical alert call and the dispatcher has talked to the caller and it turns out the person isn't hurt and just needs a "citizen assist" to help them back on their feet. It's not a medical call. He said that the dispatchers aren't telling the fire departments that so the FD is coming in with lights and sirens to a call that we doesn't need it. It risks lives and resources. Adam said that he understands that dispatchers have to use the codes but agencies also need additional information if the dispatcher has that.

It was noted that this is exactly what I Am Responding is for – you can get the information that dispatchers didn't say over the radio. The complaint is that some people don't feel like they are getting the information fast enough through IAR. Director Combs stated that if departments are not getting the info they need then they need to let him know so he can address the issue. If you're getting sent to alarm calls and when you're on your way there you find out it's just a fall with no injuries, let dispatch know. The KRCC doesn't always get all the info from the alarm company.

*Chief Farley at 2:25 p.m.*

Chris Young commented that the problems he's been hearing about are specifically from the fire and EMS side related to the standardized dispatching protocols. Police don't have that yet so there aren't so many rules about what the dispatchers say. This is why the law enforcement community is fighting that being implemented for law enforcement dispatching. Patrick Polky said that he agreed with Chief Young and added that Fire and EMS agencies need to recognize that Director Coombs has to train his staff the way the PUC wants, and he does the best he can to balance that.

There was a discussion about whether it's the code system to be blamed or just a need for more information beyond the generic code that the dispatching system produces. Adam Miceli felt that agencies shouldn't have to call dispatch after being toned out to find out if there's more info than what is said over the radio or in IAR because it slows things down. The example he gave was that if the caller says "my kitchen is on fire" tell the fire department that – don't just put "structure fire" and call it good. The responding agency needs that other specific information because it changes the response, both in what staff gets sent, and with what equipment.

Director Coombs said that the KRCC just needs to make sure that when the calls go out, dispatchers give as much information as they can no matter how long it ties up the radio. If dispatch is still keying info, don't send dispatch "we're in route" on high band. It was suggested having a discussion with dispatchers to teach them about what information fire departments need on their way to a call; Director Coombs liked the idea of having this training, or discussion, coming from agencies rather than it coming through the director or supervisors.

Administrator Hart wanted to discuss whether the KRCC should continue trying to get a deputy director or should the Board consider having a 3<sup>rd</sup> supervisor. Director Coombs explained that since we're in the middle of a pandemic, he is at the office and not traveling to meetings because meetings are being conducted online remotely, so he's able to help out more in the center. Having a third supervisor would help in being able to spread out the coverage. With the staffing full and less people needing training, supervisors will have more time to do supervisor duties. At this time, a 3<sup>rd</sup> supervisor would be of much greater value than a deputy director. There was some concern voiced that if the County decided to hire a 3<sup>rd</sup> supervisor instead of a deputy director, that the Budget Committee will think it was proof that the KRCC never needed a deputy director in the first place.

Administrator Hart suggested polling the other dispatch centers to see if they have a deputy director because things could have changed since the County did the HR study.

**III. Other Business**

There was none.

**IV. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards  
Administrative Programs Coordinator